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*Kansas Association of Teachers of Science*

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# WOMEN IN SCIENCE—BIBLIOGRAPHY OFFER

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Most high level science careers are not pursued by women in any large proportion. Women comprise less than ten percent of American physicians, engineers, geologists, chemists, physicists, dentists, and veterinarians. On the other hand, women are over-represented in such science-related careers as nursing, dental hygiene, medical technology, physical and occupational therapy, and dietetics. Men encounter personal barriers or social pressures which make difficult their entry into "women's work." Likewise, women cannot easily pursue "men's careers." The result includes society's cheating itself by its under-utilization of science talents and the individual's having a reduced range of choices which could lead to a meaningful and satisfying life.

Although education is not the only, and perhaps not even the major, culprit, we educators—teachers, counselors, and administrators—have gone about our business in such a way that we reinforce and perpetuate the waste of talent and constriction of choice. Too often, without question or forethought, we use books which portray women in traditional, if not demeaning, roles. In our teaching we emphasize the arbitrary distinction of sex (e.g., boys against girls, or, "John, you've been so bad that you'll have to sit with the girls"). We counsel students by suggesting only the traditional sex-related occupations to them (e.g., "Boys are doctors, girls are nurses") or even actively steer students away from pursuing certain careers by forbidding or discouraging their taking particular courses. In the curriculum and extra-curriculum we emphasize the importance of men as active leaders and women as passive followers.

We must join teachers, parents, and others who are making a concerted effort at all levels of education to reverse our practice of pigeonholing students on the basis of sex. First and most basically, we must recognize and make every effort to discontinue our own sexist educational practices. Second, we must encourage all talented and interested students in courses and activities which will enable them to pursue appropriate careers. Third, we must provide appropriate role models (e.g., male nurses and primary teachers, female doctors and

engineers). Fourth and most important, we must make an active effort to enable students to identify personal and societal barriers to their entry into careers which have not traditionally been pursued by their particular sex.

Several books and articles about sexism in education are now available. A brief bibliography of materials easily available to educators can be obtained from Dr. Walter S. Smith, 222 Strong Hall, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply.

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